

BOOK REVIEW

Paul Elder. *Eyes of an Angel: Soul Travel, Spirit Guides, Soul Mates, and the Reality of Love*. Charlottesville, Va.: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc., 2005

Reviewed by Matthew Fike, PhD

“Eyes of an Angel addresses some of the most revealing and astonishing aspects of the relationships binding each and every soul in our universe. It’s the story of the evolution of consciousness of an avowed skeptic to that of an ardent spiritual believer.” So states author and TMI facilitator Paul Elder in the introduction to his fascinating and moving new book, which treats spiritual unfolding as a kind of Platonic anamnesis (learning as remembering what we already know but have forgotten). “It’s not so much a matter of learning about these [spiritual] things,” his spirit guide Meldor tells him, “as it is a matter of remembering what you already know.” The difficulty of remembering makes human life an exciting challenge, and the importance of love—“how we treated others along the way”—is the ultimate virtue to be remembered and embraced. “Nothing in our physical dimension,” writes Elder, “is of any consequence or lasting reality. The only enduring reality is love.” It follows, then, that eyes—“your own eyes, and the eyes of your loved ones”—are an excellent place to begin searching for answers to life’s mysteries, hence the book’s title.

As Elder’s experiences illustrate, crises can result in incredible psychic experiences, provide tremendous insights, and put one on the fast track to spiritual growth. The author had three near-death experiences (a near drowning in childhood, an automobile accident in youth, and a heart attack as an adult)—four if one counts the time his younger brother shot a tin can off his head with a .22-caliber rifle. From a young age, Elder has also had spontaneous out-of-body experiences, but the major catalyst for his spiritual growth was a series of visits to The Monroe Institute (the book narrates his experiences at the *GATEWAY VOYAGE*®, two *GUIDELINES*® courses, *LIFELINE*®, and *EXPLORATION 27*®). A synergy of experiences enabled him to shift from having walls up around his heart because of traumatic childhood and past-life experiences to releasing blockages and embracing feminine energy (personified by his wife Candace, daughter Stacey, and soul friend Patricia).

Eyes of an Angel also describes an impressive range of psychic experiences. Elder achieves astral sight, feels colors, experiences déjà vu, travels into outer space and within the inner space of his own body, communicates with the soul that once inhabited the miscarried fetus of a potential sibling, struggles with the silver cord, develops his intuition, has visions through his third eye, retrieves lost souls, visits the Akashic Record to study his past lifetimes, meets his soul group, finds himself in someone else’s body, visits hell, has astral sex, and encounters the being known as Jesus Christ. And this is an incomplete list. Particularly satisfying—for Elder

and the reader—are various confirmations that he is not just imagining it all: he sees his sister's spirit leave her body at the exact time (he later learns) that her heart temporarily stopped, he cuts open a wall and finds a nail that he felt with his astral hand, he verifies that his wife and son wore specific clothing at times when he visited them out-of-body, and he and other TMI participants see each other during tape exercises.

Chronicling such a wide variety of psychic experiences makes *Eyes of an Angel* an excellent narrative, but the book also teaches—mostly through dialogue between Elder and his Guides—a powerful lesson in what it means to be human. Topics covered include God, the soul, predestination, reincarnation, spirit guides, intuition, the afterlife, and many others. Thus Elder weaves his own experiences into a larger theoretical framework, but a further point—that the realm of spirit transcends physical life on earth—is enacted rather than directly stated. The book does so in a subtle and surprising way, by using two fonts in the chapter titles. For example, the typography of “The Ultimate Mission,” the title of chapter 8, implies that while we are here on earth in physical bodies (the physical world, single letters, regular type), we have a much greater and more elegant life in the spirit, available through dreams, meditation, and the paranormal experiences enabled by The Monroe Institute (the spirit world, multiple letters, italics).

Elder's chronicle of psychic unfolding is first-rate, his overview of the life cycle seems highly likely, and the chapter titles are artful; however, one may take exception to several aspects of *Eyes of an Angel*. First, the author might fruitfully distinguish between the multiple persons connected to us in karmic ways (“soul mates”) and primordial soul pairs (“twin souls”). Second, it is surprising that Elder, who took four courses at the Institute before Robert Monroe's transition in 1995, never mentions meeting the man or hearing him speak. Readers whose association with the Institute postdates that event would have appreciated any anecdotes that Elder has to share. And third, the claim that evolution and the Creator are mutually exclusive is a false dichotomy—the kind of binary, either/or thinking that is terrestrial rather than spiritual. As Matt Ridley states in *Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters*, even Pope John Paul II posited an “‘ontological discontinuity’—a point at which God injected a human soul into an animal lineage. Thus can the Church [and New Age spiritual explorers] be reconciled to evolutionary theory.”

For these reasons, *Eyes of an Angel* may not be totally satisfying, but it is still a gripping story, which culminates in important revelations about Elder's twin soul, Patricia, their recovery of traumatic childhood memories, and a dazzling reading by a professional psychic. These and many other profound experiences may foster high expectations for TMI program participants, so it is good that Elder emphasizes a number of commonsense principles for successful exploration: meditative practice, reading in metaphysical literature, attention to guidance, and patient detachment from desired outcomes. The author concludes with a question: How can a

soul be both incarnate and in the spirit at the same time? He does not venture an answer because he does not yet have one. I hope that he will address the issue in his next volume.

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